

Dreams and Human Nature: An African Viewpoint

Ucheoma C. OSUJI Ph.D.

Department of Philosophy, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria

uc211179[at]yahoo.com

ucheoma.osuji[at]aaau.edu.ng

Abstract: *Beyond the classical renditions of humans being composed of body and soul, there are complimentary perspectives that see humans beyond this dualism. Thus, an African perspective provides an insight to this view drawing analysis from dreams because they are important parts of our lives. The aim of this essay is to discuss the impact of dreams in understanding the component of human nature from an African perspective. The objective is to discuss on how best we can explain and justify the traditional thought systems that operate on the belief in dreams and their explanations of human nature: The roles of dream; in the personality building, as information retrieval system (source of knowledge), as intelligible (system of illumination and divine assistance) and cognitive part of life will be discussed. In this essay, I will begin with the conceptual clarification of dreams drawing instances from western and oriental perspectives. I will proceed to the African perspective, where I will limit my explanations to the Nigerian scenario (Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba and Efik and / or Ibibio). From here, I will discuss on the components of human nature from an African perspective drawing analysis from dreams and dreaming. Thus, I shall be discussing; what aspect(s) of human body is involved in dreams and dreaming? The varying states of human nature indifferent states; wake, sleep and dream such as Eleda (Yoruba explanation of bodily representatives outside the body), inner person as distinct from spirit and body, nro (Igbo perspective), dream activities, and friends and their appearances in real life (Efik perspective), will be explained using descriptive and autoethnographic analysis. Thus, I shall be addressing two issues; are humans made of just body and soul?' and the connections between objective existence, dreams and self-consciousness will be re-visited, from an African viewpoint. In the remaining part of the paper, the contemporary implications of the authenticity of dream activities becoming real when remembered, and relating to real life will be discussed.*

Keywords: Africa, Dreams, Human Nature, Philosophy, Traditional thought systems, illumination

1. Introduction

The overriding reading and deliberations on alien epistemologies have made Africans theorize them and leaving what belongs to Africa underdeveloped. African philosophy has been with African for ages in different forms (orals, symbols, written, folklores). The task of philosophy is not to throw the common man's view into the dustbin mainly because it is unreflective. Philosophical investigation and reflection is supposed to discover and find out the inherent difficulties in the common sense, redefine, refine, and remodel them.¹ Philosophy, in this essay, will be used in two senses: as world-view and as critical theory.² Philosophy is distinct from others disciplines because of its attempt at discovering most underlying principles of realities in its various dimension as well as its method of rational reflection.³ Philosophy does not discover any new empirical facts; it reflects on the facts we already have to see what and where they all hang together.⁴ Philosophy by its dynamic nature as a critical examination of belief and practices is revolutionary.⁵ Thus, the need to provoke our minds to examine other unpopular ideas and orientations is a call for complementarily, intercultural dialogue and regimes of discourses as well as a challenge to dogmatism. Thus this

perception on dreams and human nature from Africa is necessary especially to understand it from other orientations and which may not be main stream and orthodox.

African philosophy is the philosophy of the people that dwells within the continent of African and diaspora. It is also the way Africans know, behave and understand the world around them. African philosophy is dynamic; it conceives reality as physical, mental and spiritual.⁶ Thus, the relationship between man and spiritual world is conceived and completely expressed in the sense of the normal social interaction within the extended family, though a transcendental, invisible and enigmatic way.⁷ Central to African philosophy is the conception of the human nature. The conception of human nature has been theorized by scholars in Africa. The problem with such theories is that they used western methodology. Ishola⁸ confirmed that scholars have come up with literatures in African philosophy but mostly western methodology. The reappraisal of African conception of dreams and human nature becomes a philosophical imperative. This study is a critical engagement on an African perspective on dreams and human nature with a view of identifying its strengths and weaknesses as well as the rationale behind the belief on dreams.

¹ Innocent Onyewuenyi, "African and Reincarnation: A Reappraisal" in *The Philosophical Quest: A Cross-cultural reader*, G. M. Presbey, K.J. Struhl and R.E.Olsen (eds.) 2nd edition, Boston: McGraw Hill, 2000, 338

² O.Oladipo, "Philosophy and Culture in *Philosophy and Society*, Ayo fadahunsi (ed.), Ibadan: Hope publication, 1999, p.20.

³ Isacc Ukpokolo, *Philosophy Interrogates Culture*, Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2004, p. 5.

⁴ J. Lewis, *History of Philosophy*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970, pp. 10-11.

⁵ S. Ogunbemi, *Philosophy and Development*, Ibadan: Hope Publication, 2007, p.14.

⁶ Onos. G.idjakpo, "The Meaning of Africa and Western Metaphysics: A Conceptual Analysis" in *Footmarks in African Philosophy*, A. F. Uduigwomen (ed.), Lagos: Obaroh & Ogbinaka press, 1995, p.53.

⁷ C.O.Uchegbue, "The Concept of Man's Spiritual Companions in Igbo Traditional Thought" in *Footmarks in African Philosophy*, A. F. Uduigwomen (ed.), Lagos: Obaroh & Ogbinaka press, 1995, p. 92.

⁸ W. Ishola *Can Our culture and Traditions Overcome Corruption?*, Lagos: Malthouse Press limited, CBAAC Monograph, 2007, p.22.

Philosophy as a discipline has its unique methods including analytic, critical, dialectical and other methods of reasoning. Ogungbemi⁹ notes that one cannot be too rigid on methodology of philosophy because it depends on which aspect of philosophy one wants to discuss. More so, the methods might overlap in such a way that one may employ more than three methods. But then, the hallmark of philosophical method is argument. The methodology of this research is descriptive and autoethnographic analysis. Thus the data from this research came from four sources. First, through the gristmill of auto- ethnographical methodology, this paper historicizes the development of challenges associated with understanding dreams, dreaming and human nature. Autoethnograph has to do with when the phenomena (dreams) under investigation are examined through the eyes and experiences of individual participants. Auto-ethnographical methodology more so deals with how one perceives one's experience and how others perceive what one perceives about one's experience. Thus listening to others experiences of dreams helps us to sharpen our own perception of things. This helps us to avoid subjective analysis of one's personal experience isolated from others. Thus this paper builds on observations, accounts, comments, informal and traditional experiences of participants as well as my experiences. The second sources of data came from reading literature on dream, dreaming and human nature, and the role of dreams in human relations among the Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Efik of Nigeria. The third source came as a product of qualitative (interview-based field work) which the author took during a series of meeting with selected people from the different tribes in Nigeria. The result of the study formed the third antecedent on dreaming, the details and analysis of which will be discussed later. The fourth source came from a review of some pertinent antecedent records on philosophical anthropology on human nature and duality of human nature in Africa. The pertinent antecedent is the notion of human nature as espoused by some of these African perspectives.¹⁰ This, however, could be a good basis for further studies to verify the submissions I have here. I will employ descriptive analysis to capture the details from the various accounts. This is a critical aspect of philosophy where the challenging prevailing descriptions of ourselves and our situations (dreams), will be offering new descriptions towards understanding human nature. This, will in Richard Rorty's words, engender new discourse, new science, new philosophical research programs and new objective truths.¹¹ This will enlighten our understanding on the intellectual foundations of African culture, human nature and anthropology.

The scope of this research is African (Nigeria) perspective: my explanations from Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba and Efik and / or Ibibio, amongst others. The purpose here is to emphasize that

⁹S. Ogungbemi, *Philosophy and Development*, p.15.

¹⁰Wiredu, "The Akan Concept of Mind" in *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, 1983, p.118: Also K. Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 85-103.; C. O. Uchegbue, "The Concept of Man's Spiritual Companions in Igbo Traditional Thought" in A. F. Uduigwomen (ed.), *Footmarks on African Philosophy*, Lagos: Obaroh & Ogbinaka Press.

¹¹Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980, pp.278-9.

there is an intercultural dimension to understanding dreams, dreaming and human nature. The delimitation of this study is language variations: the problem of intercultural philosophical discourses is usually making issues intelligible to the people who own the language concerned. And if they can understand, they can evaluate, for to understand a proposition is to know what it means for it to be true or for it to be false, which entails the possibility of knowing in what circumstances these truths values can hold.¹² The delimitation of study is the exposition of one culture to another in terms of vocabulary, thought-conception, interpretation and translations (the subtle meaning and symbolic implications of the vocabularies and terminologies involved). This does not enable adequate flexibility of language: Here is the difficulty of this enterprise. Attention is paid to the level of discourse at which language, any natural language, is relatively neutral philosophically; thus, at this level of discourse, indispensable but almost indistinguishable, makes intercultural philosophical interaction and congruencies possible. Given these possibilities, unwitting trafficking of conceptions was avoided: Translations, transliterations and reformulations were done without disentangling basic connotations. The significance of this study is that it promotes inter-culturalism and African philosophizing. It is worthy to note that African philosophizing in our time is essentially a continual exercise in culturalism¹³, interculturalism. Interculturalism is an involuntary aspect of African academic philosophizing.¹⁴

Humans are dynamic beings, they are not only rational beings, emotional, religious and lots more, but are dream beings too. Dreams and dreaming is another factor that makes us unique beings. Dreams are important part of our lives. Dreams may be one of the mind's ways to maintain sanity, to cope with life.¹⁵ We dream about a lot of things; our ambitions, expectations, carriers and worries. Dreams are special where human beings require a divine assistance in their ordinary cognitive activities.¹⁶ It is however, self-consciousness and recognition of otherness of the experienced world that an appeal is made to the origin of dreams and their functions. If the product of dream results to action, it become interpreted as a response to human condition.

Though, published anthropological literatures on Africa show that African World-views can be grouped according to the ecology of the region in which they are found.¹⁷ For instance, many West African people who are settled agriculturalist and live in large communities spread over

¹²K. Wiredu, "Can Philosophy be Intercultural" *Diogenes*, no. 184, vol. 46/4, (1998) p.147.

¹³B.M. Akinawonu and U.C. Osuji, "Philosophy, Culture and indigenous Knowledge forms" in *Philosophy and Culture: Interrogating the Nexus*, Felix Ayoh Omidire et.al (eds.), Salvador: Segundo Selo, 2020, pp.36-8.

¹⁴K. Wiredu, "Can Philosophy be Intercultural", p.152.

¹⁵Garfield & Stewart-Garfield, *Dreams*, London: Greenwich edition, 1999, p. 6.

¹⁶E.M. Ogunde, "Divine Illumination as a condition for True Knowledge in the Philosophy of St. Augustine" *Ekpoma Review*, volume 4. (2018)

¹⁷P.O. Ezechukwu, "Appreciating the Different World views in African Tribes: An Exposition" in G. O. Ozumba (ed.) *A Colloquium on African Philosophy*, Calabar: Jochrisam. 2004, p.7.

densely populated areas have a densely populated spiritual world. While most peoples of east and southern Africa who inhabit more open country, and semi-nomadic pastoralist have less densely populated world-views with simpler structure. The structure of nomadic world-views falls somewhere in-between. The belief that dreams at times have impact in our lives dominates the traditional thought of Igbo,¹⁸ Hausa, Yoruba and Efik¹⁹ of Nigeria, Africa. This is aided by the belief that the spiritual controls the physical. Hence, a number of things one does in dream can have positive impact in waking life. Hence, the aim of this paper is to examine the reality of dream and its impact on the traditional conception of human nature. The objectives of this paper are to explore the nature of human dream; is it spiritual or cognitive or an active conscious level of existence and stage of life. Which part of the humans is involved in dreaming: Body (brain/ psychic), or the spirit, or a third part? An African perspective will highlight more on this.

2. Human Nature: an Expository analysis

The philosophy of human nature is discussed as philosophical anthropology. It is a philosophical inquiry about the human nature and human phenomena. It seeks to unify the several investigations about human nature that are not scientific, attempting to understand human individuals as both creatures of their environment and creators of their norms and culture. In this study, philosophical anthropology will be used to unify the intercultural understandings of dreams and human nature.

It is now widely seen among philosophers that any quest for a human nature or essence such as a rational or soul substance as proposed by Descartes or Thomas Aquinas is usually open to philosophical objection. These varying conceptualizations of the mind-body problem have led to diverse assertions or claims from different philosophers. For instance, Plato, Augustine, Aquinas all have conceived the mind as an entity that can exist on its own without the body. David Human and Bertrand Russell, have denied that the mind is a separate substance which can exist independent of the body. For them, the mind is nothing other than series of perceptions which succeed each other in sequence. In attempt to explain the mind-body problem, there are several schools of thought such as interactionism, parallelism, epiphenomenalism, the double-aspect theory and the identity theory. Some philosophers have proposed the approach of thinking about ourselves as unitary beings and to investigate what we do other than what we are.²⁰ Thus, Ukpokolo proposed a philosophical anthropology as follows: 'A human being is a unified biological organism capable of action...'²¹The problem that has engaged the attention of the great thinkers of classical philosophy is this: How is this

duality of principles be explained? Is it a single reality or a multiple reality?

An important aspect of this human (comprised of body and spirit) has inspired mechanistic view of the world. This is premised on the concrete effort to separate spirit and matter. This has led to domination, and control of nature, affirming that scientific knowledge could be used to render ourselves the masters and possessors of nature. In other words, Cartesian idea of (mind-body) gave new orientation that led the conquest, colonized rules in Africa, humans, cultures and thought processes. This has led the African Philosopher, Kwasi Wiredu to write:

In Africa, because of colonialism, an artificial gap has been created between our institution education in philosophy and traditional philosophies of our societies. Therefore, the task of quarrying out traditional philosophical resources and, wherever appropriate, synthesizing the results with any relevant insight largely remains to be undertaken.²²

Indeed, 'quarrying out traditional philosophical resources' must remain the pre-occupation of African intellectuals if Africans Indigenous knowledge systems are to be exhumed from the condensations of hegemonic colonial knowledge. It is in the light of these that we can ascertain that the growth of philosophical anthropology may be seen as part of the attempt to address both the fragmentation of knowledge and human condition especially dreams. An African philosophical anthropology could be used to identify the missing link to explain the mind-body problem. Again, beliefs are patterns drawn from the observation of the world around them and some of their cultural experiences which forms an essential part of their philosophical anthropology. From the African perspective, humans are more than body and soul. They are beyond religious and rational beings. They are also beyond evolution (Charles Darwin theory) and scientific explanation of organic beings.

3. Instances of belief in Dream and its connection with Human Nature

From the western anthology, the human is made of just body and spirit. There is a missing explanation here; what then is this missing link between the body and spirit? This was a thorny problem which philosophers have tried to reflect on over the ages. But, then, What is the role of dreams in humans' lives? Nonetheless, if dreams are concerned with human nature, we are faced with these questions? What part of the human body dreams? How can we be manipulated in dreams? And how can dreams go beyond normal human relationship? I will attempt these questions in the next section.

A complementary African perspective will be examined in this regard. The body and the spirit are not the same thing. There are different components of the human being. A discourse on African (Igbo, Yoruba and Efik) understanding

¹⁸ Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba are the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. the Igbos live in south-east, the Yoruba live in south west while the Hausa lives in Northern, Nigeria.

¹⁹ Efiks are peculiar people who occupied the riverine area of the old Calabar. They live in south-south, Nigeria.

²⁰ Isacc Ukpokolo, *Philosophy Interrogates Culture*, p.15.

²¹ *ibid.* p. 15

²² K. Wiredu, "The Akan Concept of Mind" in *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, 1983, pp.32-33.

of the components of human provides an answer to the poser above. Humans are composed of the body, spirit and the third which shall be discoursed here. We shall begin with the body.

- 1) *Body* contains the mind, thoughts, and senses. It is the container that harbours the spirit. The human body is an epistemic valve for understanding reality.²³ It is the fulcrum for epistemological and cognitive activities.
- 2) *Spirit*: This is the volatile man. It houses the soul too. The spirit is pure, undefiled and returns to the maker. This is why Hegel writes that “the spirit is that which has its centres in itself ... it found its unity in itself and with itself. Spirit is being within itself (self-contained existence), this self-contained existence of the spirit is self-consciousness, self-consciousness of the self.”²⁴ It is the actuating and idealizing principle which identifies everything to itself. The human spirit is essentially an incarnated spirit destined to give form to the body through the *eleda*. It is the spirit that makes the body a delicate instrument of spiritual functions. The concept of the spirit is one that common in all African belief systems. The spirit, Idoniboye explains;

It is by joining of a spirit to the material body that all things are created and it is by the separation of spirit from the body that they are destroyed ... spirit is real ... it is unembodied. Spirit is the animating, sustaining, creative life-force of the universe. In human bodies it is the mind and soul.²⁵

Thus, the spirit is real and has objective existence. Again, the spirits are not just symbols of social norms, but invisible entities in explanatory modes, and should not be compared with theoretical entities such as forces or electrons in explanatory science.²⁶

- 3) Image representative / *Eleda* (Yoruba) / *iyiyoro*(Igbo) / active counterpart: This mediates between the body and spirit. It is characterized by the physical looks and nature of man. Though there is no English equivalent word for this. It is the seal of the physical and spiritual components of man. This is human nature; a point where spirit and nature unite. It provides the deep unity which binds spirit and body together, allows us to see the kind of spiritualization to which the human body is elevated. It gives equilibrium to the body and spirit; it represents higher metaphysical principles, Umeh²⁷ notes that they are not available to conventional science. It participates in the very dignity of the spirit and dignity of the person. This is the mechanics the human body have in exhibiting

all humanly features. Sometimes, it can be seen physically depending on the situation (incidence of bilocation and people that sees spirits). In Unah's perspective, there is a difference between what makes a thing be and a thing itself²⁸ and a thing-in-itself. This is what makes living a process. The active counterpart is the centre of the individual's being. It puts the body in unity; it holds the individual into a mechanistic whole.

A similar perspective is held by Akan people of Ghana. From the Akan's perspective, the human person is also the mixture of physical and spiritual entities: The *nipadu* (body), *Ökra*, (which is a life-giving entity or soul) and the *sunsum* (that which gives a person personality it forces).²⁹ In Yoruba saying, *Eledaa mi ma sun* (my inner man do not sleep). It is believed that some *eleda* is active while others are passive. When they want to harm *eledaa*, and such activity did not work, they conclude that the person's *eledaa* is very strong. This also happens in Igbo believe where some people do not respond to evil manipulations, it is expressed as; *mmo siri ike*. The active counterpart determines one's destiny (*ayanmo*) and achievement. It is *eledaa* that one talks to achieve his destiny; sometimes *eledaa* and destiny are used interwoven in Yoruba expression. Thus, the Efik, Igbo and Yoruba people conceives it as someone spiritual representative or inner person. It accommodates the will, liberty, human / personality principles, memory, certain kinds of knowledge, dreams and conditions the nature of activity of the spirit on the body.

Thus the human body, active counterpart and the spirit must be present to make a wake stage of life. For instance, a narration³⁰ of death incidence goes thus:

My sick husband was admitted in the hospital, after two days, he stopped taking to us, but was eating when food is forced into his mouth. He was breathing, though a little bit fast, but with eyes closed. Two weeks later he was in this same condition. Breathing, eating but with eyes closed and speechless. My husband extended family members came and decided that we leave the hospital and seek alternative approach from traditional healers. I agreed. When we got home, a traditional healer was called, he said what was holding him is spiritual. He said my husband is death since nine days now. But because of the presence of his loved ones his spirit refuses to depart. The traditional healer said that he has to consult him if he is ready to follow the ancestors or he still want to live. After much consultation, the traditional healer said my husband want to stay. The traditional healer said another life is

²³ U.C. Osuji, “The Human Person as an Epistemic Route to Understanding Reality: in *Ekpoma Review*, (2020) Vol. 7, pp.193-5.

²⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, J. Sibree (trans.), New York: Dover, 1956, p.23.

²⁵ D.E. Idoniboye, “The Idea of an African Philosophy: the Concept of the Spirit in African Metaphysics,” *Second Order*, vol. II, Nos 1. 1973, p. 85.

²⁶ D. Emmet, “Haunted Universe” *Second Order*, Volume 1, number 1, (1972), p 34.

²⁷ J. A. Umeh, *After God is Dibia*, London: Kamak House, 1997, p.13.

²⁸ Jim I. Unah, “The Nature of African Metaphysics” in *The Nigerian Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 12, number 2, 1992, p.73.

²⁹ K. Wiredu, “The Akan Concept of Mind” in *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, 1983, p.118: Also K. Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 85-103.

³⁰ This is a narration of Mrs. Anthonia Achinike, from Umediagba, Abaje, Nwangele Local Government Area of Imo State, who lost her husband on Wednesday November 10, 2015. The narration was received on Sunday 16th of June, 2019.

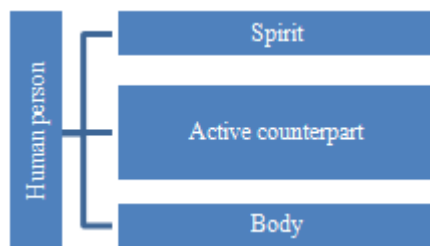
needed to replace his. I asked which life is needed. He said the least in the family. The entire family said no, because the living will decide for the dying. Within me, I said what if the traditional healer is lying, so I let the decision of the family stand. The healer declared that, he is not of their decision to let my husband die. He then moved round the dying body and chanted some words, and suddenly cut the rope. My husband breathed his last breath. Suddenly, cry thundered like never before in my home.

Another narration follows thus:

When my grade mother felt sick and was diagnosed of stroke, at a stage, she was breathing but her body is not moving; My grade mother's brother said that she is dead even though she is still breathing. It is only a Babalawo that can explain the phenomena. The Babalawo was consulted and we were told to break a native egg on her so that she stops breathing. This was done and she stopped breathing and was buried.³¹

There are several cases on that which we may not be able to accommodate here.

The justification of these is that some people die through dreams. The body, the spirit and inner person must be active for people to experience wake life. The spirit and body is not enough to make wake life. The active counterpart must be there to connect the body and spirit. Otherwise wake life is not possible. The epistemology and world view of Africa dream psychology is strongly influenced by the African people perception of the world as consisting of interpreting realms of beings.



There are more ways of accounting for the active counterpart through the incidences of coma, out-of-body experience, the incidences of bilocation, near-death experiences. All these are incidences where the active counterpart left the body and are involved in other activities. One fact is that the activities of the active counterpart are also remembered during these experiences or being. This means that the active counterpart lives a conscious sphere of existences.

But when the active counterpart leaves the body at will and comes back, it is involved in dreams and other activities. It is also the human part that can be manipulated by high mystical and metaphysical powers. This is where people

complain of being beaten in dream and on wake they feel the pains, or tired. It is this active counterpart that people manipulate and cease the person's will, make the person inactive in body and action wise. This where the contemporary Pentecostal churches claims of person being initiated through dreams: It also accounts while people after eating in dreams do not feel hungry on wake life. The November 2018 murder in Ikare, Akoko, Ondo state Nigeria, called the attention of Military men who was investigating the crime. The investigation was taken long and unsuccessful, when the inpatient victim's relative consulted the elders and traditional spiritual leaders. What they did is to summon the inner person (*eleda*) to come home and report himself. Two days later, he came home and submitted himself willingly as the murder. There is also the Yoruba traditional believe that 'people borrow another body or personality to perpetrate evil, crimes and there after return the body.' Idoniboye writes;

For example, a witch turns into a bat; the witch-turned-bat gets killed somehow in the course of its evil machinations, the parent body dies as well. Or if any injury befalls it, the parent body also sustains the injury.³²

In another instance, Ogungbemi collaborates that:

Witches are believed to operate in secrecy, and they possess the capacity to change into birds, animals and use other unusual dresses. They go about their 'night business' while their physical bodies are on their beds.³³

This is why witchcraft is described as the activity of the soul and its preys are affected in a spiritual manner. This is what is sustaining the belief in witchcraft despite the growth of Christianity and modernity. This is the function of the active counterpart. The active counterpart or image representative can always leave the body and come back. When it leaves the body, the spirit is still there but as quiescent counterpart to the body with the aim of animating the body. Thus, the person might be said to be in deep sleep, no noise can wake the person up. This is seen when one is in coma, the body will not get up even though the person is breathing. If there is any harm to the active principle, the person get hurt that it cannot fit into the body, the person dies. There is also instance where the body is physically incapable of sustaining the inner counterpart, it then, departs and the spirit moves away as well.

The active counterpart is the human part involves in dreaming, metempsychosis, and reincarnation. The belief in metempsychosis is peculiar with Ibibio (Efik) of south eastern Nigeria; while the belief in reincarnation is general among all Nigeria cultures. Metempsychosis, understood from the Ibibio traditional thought as the process of changing a person's soul (active counterpart) at will in order to acquire the characteristics of the preferred object that the

³¹ This narration is from Oluwabumi Ogunbodede from Owo, Ondo State Nigeria.

³²D.E. Idoniboye, "The Idea of an African Philosophy: the Concept of the Spirit in African Metaphysics," 1973, pp. 87-8.

³³S. Ogungbemi, *Philosophy and Development*, p. 129

new soul represents.³⁴ This active counterpart or inner connector has been conceived as soul in Ibibio (Efik) traditional thought. The soul in Ibibio belief is the life-giving force in the human body.³⁵ In this regard, Ekong E. Ekong writes:

The Ibibio belief that the soul (*ukpong*) which is the seat of personality is affiliated to other beings; and then the flesh and bones ... A man's soul is believed to inhere in animals, birds, fishes, or trees. The soul can be projected during sleep so that the individuals take on the form of his or her affinity. People project their souls during sleep into animals... mainly to be able to execute some evil designs which would be readily condemned if they were to be in their normal human forms ... it is also possible to invoke a person's soul into a plantain tree and when the tree is hewn down the person dies instantly.³⁶

From the Ibibio perspective, the soul, mind, spirit, and the body make up the nature of human. They all make up separate entities constituting human nature. One thing about the Ibibio perspective is that the soul is conceived as free entity; it moves out of the body and comes in at will. It is the part of the human body that is harmed and manipulated as well, thus:

The peculiar thing about the soul is that it is harmed or destroyed somehow. The person to whom it belongs also suffers the same fate unless a quick step is taken to change the soul from which has been harmed to another. This process is known as metempsychosis (*Ukponghoukpong*). This process of changing soul is a delicate one and requires experts to perform or else one could be given what one did not bargain.³⁷

It is the human part that can be manipulated by high mystical and Metaphysical powers. This is where people complain of being beaten in dream and on wake they feel the pains, or tired. It is this active counterpart that people manipulate and cease the person's will, make the person inactive bodily and action wise. This where the contemporary Pentecostal churches claim of person being initiated through dreams, of being demonized. It also accounts while people after eating in dreams do not feel hungry on wake life.

Again, we ask: what becomes of the body in the absence of the soul? The body continues to breath. Ojong³⁸ thought that

the conception of human person in Ibibio perspective suggests another broad area of research. I think that Ojong has been engrossed in the classical conception of human nature in body-soul relations (dualism). Thus following Ibibio's conception of human nature the need to proffer explanatory gap in mind-body dualism becomes necessary. Thus this work as have seen provided asymmetries to fill this unexplained gap. The active counterpart also accounts for people experiences out of body experience, coma, bilocation, near death experiences, telepathy. The experiences of active counterpart influence the belief in reincarnation, life after death, quantum theory, resurrection, ancestor, living dead, quantum theories and lots of other beliefs.

Furthermore, there are various affiliations which influence the compositions of the human nature as well as contribute to the dynamism of human life within our traditional anthropology. The Yoruba believes in the incorporeal nature of man (*emi*). Ogunbemi³⁹ notes that the idea of the incorporeal substance is one the most difficult conceptions in Yoruba thought because of its complexity. He outlined three operations to demonstrate the dynamism of human nature; *Okan* (the seat of emotion and psychic energy) or (the seat of intellect), *eri okan* (conscience) and *ori* (destiny).⁴⁰ Another instance is the *Ehi* (Esan)⁴¹, and the *chi* (Igbo) is seen as a guardian spirit and moving force. This functions work together with the active counterpart to realize one's destiny and other objectives in life. From this perspective, Azenabor explains that:

Ehi is the bearer and determinant of one's destiny and moulder of one's future; it is man's personal god, who in conjunction with the Supreme Being determines one's fate on earth.⁴²

The Ibibio (Efik) traditional thought postulates that the conception of the soul as distinct from the body, but there is the 'god spirit' (*ekpo*) which is immortal and retires to the village of the spirits (*obioekpo*) when the person dies and can reincarnate.⁴³ There is also the Igbo conception of spiritual companions; this is the belief that during creation (and birth) Chukwu or Chineke (the creator God and great spirit) gives to each man a part of his divine nature called *chi*. This becomes the 'spiritual double' of the man throughout his / her life.⁴⁴ The human active counterpart more so enjoys other affinities with spiritual entities such as spiritual friends, groups, ancestors, interactions of beings and the like. It enjoys the astral space of existence. It is

³⁴Kyrian A.Ojong., Metempsychosis and reincarnation in Ibibio Thought," in A. F. Uduigwomem (ed.) *Footmarks in African Philosophy*, Lagos: Obaroh & Ogbinaka Press, 1995, p. 83.

³⁵Kyrian A.Ojong., Metempsychosis and reincarnation in Ibibio Thought," p. 84.

³⁶Ekong E. Ekong, "The Concepts of Metamorphosis and Metempsychosis in Ibibio Society," in *Journal of Cultures and Ideas*, Vol. I, No. I,(1985), pp. 134-135.

³⁷Kyrian A.Ojong., Metempsychosis and reincarnation in Ibibio Thought," p.83.

³⁸Kyrian A.Ojong., Metempsychosis and reincarnation in Ibibio Thought," p. 84.

³⁹S. Ogunbemi, *Philosophy and Development* p. 100.

⁴⁰ For more discussion on this see, S. Ogunbemi, (2007) "The Nature of Man", *Philosophy and Development*, Ibadan: Hope Publications, 99-107.

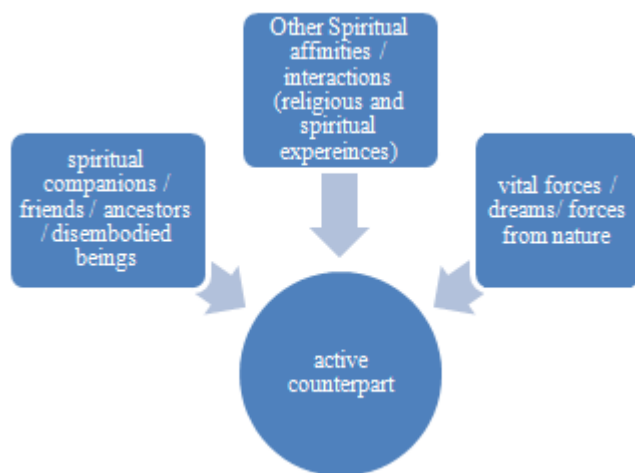
⁴¹ Esan is a tribe in Nigerian that lives in Edo State.

⁴²Azenabor Godwin, *Modern Theories in African Philosophy*, Lagos: Byolah Publishers, 2010, pp.64-5.

⁴³Kyrian A.Ojong., Metempsychosis and reincarnation in Ibibio Thought," p. 85.

⁴⁴ C. O. Uchegbue, "The Concept of Man's Spiritual Companions in Igbo Traditional Thought" in A. F. Uduigwomem (ed.), *Footmarks on African Philosophy*, Lagos: Obaroh & Ogbinaka Press, 1995, p. 91.

believed that it connects to them either through dreams or during sleep, not just bodily experiences, but remembers the experiences.



From the Igbo perspective, the active counterpart also interacts with its spiritual companions.⁴⁵ There are various conceptions of spiritual companion and their kinds. Interactions of beings⁴⁶ are also another way to understand the human nature from African traditional thought. This is to say beyond the physical, mechanical and chemical interactions of the human structure. There are also the metaphysical, mystical, psychical and much more forces causing interaction to the human body from African perspective.

In summary here, we have seen that there is a third companion to human nature which connects with the spirit and body. It is this third part that projects ones personality, link one to the spirit and nature. It is the third part which makes us to differentiate between wake and dream life, and enables us to understand conscious experiences. It is this inner part that enables us to bear, excruciating pains and agonies of life.

Having discussed the conception of human nature from African perspective, we saw that the third part is involved in dreaming. Dreams are conceived as a normal human experience. Traditional science and practices take dreams serious especially as sources of information, illuminations and revelation. Dreams have no limit. Dream in Africa is believed to provide access to various layers of unconscious which ascertains potential message for psychic equilibrium. Thus dreams are source of unconscious information.⁴⁷In

⁴⁵ The conception of human spiritual companion merits a high degree of value as an authentic cognitive, connotative and curative belief system and practices of the Igbo, at least in a specific epoch of their historical, cultural and philosophical development. For more on spiritual companion, see C. O. Uchegbue (1995) "The Concept of Man's Spiritual Companions in Igbo Traditional Thought" in A. F. Uduigwomen (ed.), *Footmarks on African Philosophy*, Lagos: Obaroh & Ogbinaka Press

⁴⁶ The discussion on interaction of beings is on P.O. Ezechukwu, "Appreciating the Different World views in African Tribes: An Exposition" in G. O. Ozumba (ed.) *A Colloquium on African Philosophy*, Calabar: Jochrisam, 2004, pp. 64-87.

⁴⁷ W. Caperton, "Dream work in psychotherapy: Jungian, post-Jungian, existential-phenomenological and cognitive-experiential

dreaming from an African psychological perspective, the individual can dream for others. Dreams occur in triangulation; this is where dream originate from another source to give message to the individuals for the benefits of others.⁴⁸ This means that there are sources of dreams in African psychology. There is the *individuaocentric* source. This originates from the dreamer and addressers the daily residue, personal needs and concerns of the dreamer. It is personal and intrapsychic.⁴⁹ This can appear in various forms; compensatory (promotes fantastic fulfilment during daily sleep; the dreamer's needs and aspiration) and anticipatory. Compensatory are dreams that show what one have done physically or continues the same activity. In that case, the dream is seen as indicating the high level of interest in such activity. Anticipatory are dreams that show the future; a dream can bring an activity that one finds oneself doing physically the next morning. The dream is said to provide direction. This also interprets the personality and the state of the person's inner being. Lastly, there are revelation dreams. This kind of dream reveals to the individual, confusion at stalk in the physical or a trauma or calamity that will happen in the future. This kind of dream is informative as well. Dreams are subjective conscious experience: they signify the mental and health status of the dreamer. Thus, there are different categories of dreams. There are dreams that one will have and thereafter describe it; he will be recommended to threat his health (especially malaria). Thus, that dream is an indicator that the body system has started malfunction. Dreams here have been used as warning signal to an upcoming health issue.

The second is intersubjective or bidirectional (triangulation) dreams. Here the dreamer dreams about another person's life, concerns, vital messages necessary for reordering, influencing and guiding the life and experience of the dreamed person (not the dreamer) are conveyed to the dreamer.

There is also the transcendentalist (spiritualist) dream. They are dreams that are called into being by the agents of spiritual and ancestral world. It contains the visitation of dead, transcendental intervention, orchestration through a meeting during sleep or trance; between the dreamer and specific agent of the ancestral or spiritual world.⁵⁰ During this meeting, the dreamer receives a key and specific message or information. Finally, dreams in Africa comes from intrasubjective, intersubjective and transcendental sources.

approach", *Graduate Journal of Counselling Psychology*, 2012, P.3.

⁴⁸ Augustine Nwoye, The Psychology and Content of Dreaming in Africa, *Journal of Black Psychology*, 2017, Vol. 43(1) 3–26, sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav, DOI: 10.1177/0095798415614159, jbp.sagepub.com

⁴⁹ Ibid, p.7

⁵⁰ Augustine Nwoye, The Psychology and Content of Dreaming in Africa, *Journal of Black Psychology*, p. 11.

4. The Philosophical problems and Inconsistencies with dreams as conscious Human Experiences

Most African societies believe in dreams. Dreams have been conceived as a way humans understood their world. Dreams are natural occurrences and are different from so many psychic experiences, influence and hallucinations.

Dreams have been conceived as special in the sense that they are seen as providing supernatural aid to people's life. What do dreams contain? Thus, dreams contain psychofacts and mental facts. Dreams possess the following characteristics:

- 1) Dreams are human experiences.
- 2) Dreams are manipulated: It is within this status of manipulation that people who involve in mystic science afflict and affect other people's life in dreams. Iroegbu notes that manipulation is not pejorative; it means ordinarily the use, and in-use of things, persons and events to produce life-promoting, or value-enhancing goals. In this context, it forms part of the corpus of the African conception and praxis of dynamic reality.⁵¹
- 3) Dreams are subjective
- 4) Dream can go beyond normal human relationships
- 5) Dreams establishes the varying dynamics of human Nature

There are other human experiences that look like dream but they are not. For example hallucination; this is usually induced especially in medical practice to divert the person's consciousness while being put to certain surgical pains. It is more of a mental and psychics activity which either returns the patient in pains after successful surgery. But there are instances where patients who passed out during surgery but later came back to life narrated where he or she went to. Who went there? Body? Spirit? Soul? Or the active counterpart? Sometimes, we feel like we are talking to ourselves inwardly; the inward voice will think with you and then you will hear let's do it, you rose and had it done? The functioning of will is at that realm.

Dreams at times are strange and disconnecting product, distinguished by many bad qualities; such as lack of logic, questionable morality, uncouth form and apparent absurdity and nonsense.⁵² Dreams are subjective experiences. It peculiar to individuals, thus one cannot say my dream is fantastic or will add value to my life or not. The problems of subjective experiences in philosophy are also part of the problems of dream. For the realists, our dreams can be described and explained: this means that we can explain our remembered dreams as they were. If our memories can remember our dreams this means that dreams carry with them a certain level of human consciousness encountered in a non-objective existence. But I think the problem is not if we can remember and explain our dreams, the problem is how to interpret our dreams.

Interpretations of dreams have been a pre-occupation of some individuals who believe so much in dreams. Sometimes, our dreams come true as we saw it while at sleep. Sometimes we do not understand it at all; we look for the interpreter of dreams, to enhance our understanding of it. Sometimes dreams come in signs, symbols and certain objects. But within us, when our have dreams that we feel it is bad, we as well know, our scepticism dies and we start looking for interpretation and what to do. This means that there are certain human connections and inclinations we have but have not been explored because we want to employ standard methodology? Can there be alternative methodology for human anthropology and science.

We are also faced with explanatory powers of dreams: The explanatory powers of dreams at times are not well articulated. Sometime explanations of dreams are plural and this reacts to the problem of cognition from dream. Of course there are people who engage in dream interpretation and lots of books on it as well.

Another problem of dream is prediction: the belief that dreams can predict the future, answer our worries and fears are not totally in error. But the problem lies in it to predict in actually in terms of what will happen. Again there is no predictive processing mechanism to accomplish it; this creates social dimensional problems; the mechanistic implementation of predictive processing.

5. Conclusion

This essay discussed dreams and human nature. Dreams are human experiences, though lacking scientific explanatory models. Dreams are not hallucinations but are real human experiences even though encountered in a non-objective experience. Dreams cannot be controlled by mere human practices like hallucinations and inducement. Against the mind-body dualism in classical (Cartesian) philosophy, this work discussed dreams in connection with its influences in understanding the conception of human nature from an African perspective. The Cartesian mind-body interaction did not provide explanation of how the mind and body interact; giving rise to different schools of thought such as physicalism, interactionism, parallelism and lots more. This explanation of human nature from African perspective is supported by the view that reality is not monotheistic; there are pluralities of ways to know the real, rational, factual and the rest which must of be from any standard or rigid methods, this essay provides complementary asymmetries to that. Thus, the best ways to study dreams is from cultural and personality accounts. To philosophize on dreams may be an effort in fruitless exercise. Thus one needs an indigenous methodology to understand dreams as well as human nature. This is so because; dreams cannot be discussed as a unitary entity. It should be discuss in relation to humans, persons actions and lots more. The ontological status of dream is that they are used to enhance the understanding of different human conditions; being awake, a sleep and the degree and depth of human consciousness.

Again, the need to understand human nature from other perspectives will complement already existing theories (like mind-body) problems and facilitate the idea of looking at

⁵¹Iroegbu, Pantaleon, *Metaphysics: The Kpim of Philosophy*, Owerri: International Universities Press LTD, 1995, p.293.

⁵²C.G Jung. *Dreams*, London, England: Ark Paperback, 1991, p.68.

reality from a non-universalistic standard as we have done from Igbo, Yoruba and Efik. These world views are phenomenologically rich in that they attempted to describe the ultimate foundation of being human and human experiences (dreams) in order to describe the essence underpinning the experiences of dreams. Thus human nature is beyond Cartesian dualism, and scientific organic unity. Humans are not just rational or thinking beings, they are also dream beings.

6. Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Dr. S. L. D. Itanrin, and Mr. O.R. Adesuyi for clarifying some concepts during this research. My students who helped me conduct the field work are specially acknowledged. They are Victor Achinike, Helen Ogunbodede, Adewumi Samuel Adeleke, Tolulope Crystal, Chinenye Mgbemere, and others who were part of the argument during harmonizing our data. Special Thanks to Udegwu Anthony, and Mr. Kingsley Ojo for his steady support and encouragement: My sincere appreciation also goes to Dr. (Mrs) Agoyi who introduced me to the Yoruba world through our numerous joint researches. My sincere gratitude goes to Prof. Tom Stoneham, Dr. Robert Davies, Grace Addison, the entire University of York and University of Ghana, Legon, for organizing this conference on "Dreams and Dreaming" (West Africa II), where this paper was first read: And also for their financial support without which I could not be there.

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